

Senator Mark Udall (D-CO), Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK), Congressman Jim Cooper (D-TN), Congressman James Lankford (R-OK), Congresswoman Sue Myrick (R-NC) - April 25, 2012

Office of Management and Budget Spokesman Kenneth Baer recently acknowledged a long and disturbing trend when he said, “Wasteful duplication of programs and overlap of effort has been around for a long time, as programs keep getting added without realizing what is already there.”

Mr. Baer is right. But just because wasteful duplication has been around a long time, doesn’t mean it has to last forever. We’ve introduced a bipartisan, commonsense solution to this longstanding problem. The country is on the verge of bankruptcy. Congress can no longer afford to be ignorant of existing federal programs while proposing new duplicative programs that will be paid for with the billions of dollars borrowed from China.

Our solution requires the Congressional Research Service (CRS) to provide a “duplication score” for all legislation before it is considered in Congress. Similar to a CBO estimate which provides members of Congress with the potential cost of legislation, this duplication score would explain if the legislation to be considered creates new programs duplicative of existing federal efforts.

We believe this reform and increased transparency will ensure Congress and taxpayers consider the duplication ramifications of legislation before wasting taxpayer dollars.

In March 2011, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a scathing report detailing \$100 billion in possible savings by eliminating duplicative programs. A year later, the GAO released a second report, also detailing \$100 billion in waste, and a report card on Congress’ lack of progress on the 2011 recommendations.

Only four of the recommendations to cut spending and end duplicative programs have been fully implemented, and even then, only one government program was actually defunded.

Let's take a closer look at the extent of duplication spread across every corner of Washington

- 209 programs for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Education, administered by 13 agencies. Cost: \$3 billion;
- 53 economic development programs at 4 agencies, specifically for entrepreneurs. Cost: \$2.6 billion each year;
- 15 financial literacy programs, administered by 13 agencies. Cost: \$30 million;
- 253 overlapping Department of Justice grant programs for crime prevention. Cost: \$30 billion since 2005;
- 94 programs to encourage private sector green building, administered by 11 agencies. Cost: Unknown. Agencies would not provide GAO with expenditures; two-thirds of the programs do not report achieved goals and measured success.

We pose a simple question: if 25 programs don't work, is a 26th program the answer? Unfortunately, instead of working to actually solve problems and make the federal government more efficient, Congress creates new government programs and throws money at them.

Cutting the fat and tightening the belt are things that all American families do. It's wrong if the federal government refuses to do the same. The GAO did the hard part for us. Now, Congress must have the courage to undertake the unglamorous, yet necessary, task of ending programs that not only do not work, but are undermining existing federal programs.

Our bill is not all that needs to be done, but these reforms are a step in the right direction. We must demonstrate to the American people that Congress is capable of working together to restore accountability and fiscal responsibility in Washington. These resolutions address Chamber-specific rules, allowing the Senate and the House to pass their own rules changes

without waiting for the other.

In exposing thousands of duplicative government programs, GAO has given us hundreds of billions of dollars in immediate savings. Both Chambers have the ability and the duty to accomplish real reform today. The real question we should be asking is when will Congress begin to assume the responsibility needed to accomplish this immediate, and essential, reform?

Refusing to work across party lines to achieve commonsense reforms like this will not cut one dime of current federal spending. Instead, a CRS duplication score will help prevent Congress from needlessly wasting money in the future on new federal programs, allowing scarce federal resources to be targeted to those programs that are most effective in providing government assistance to those who need it most.

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